

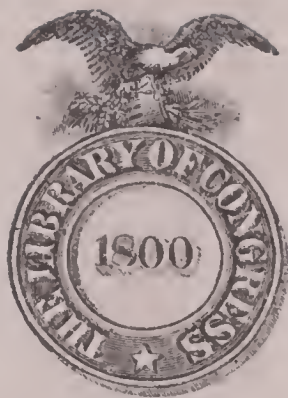
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THE STORY
OF
AKIMAKOO
AN
AFRICAN BOY

MULLER



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✓ THE
Story of Akimakoo
AN
African Boy

BY
MARY MULLER
(LENORE E. MULETS) ✓

*Author of "Little People of the Snow," "Life of a Chinese
Boy," and "Little People of Japan"*

1924
A. FLANAGAN COMPANY
CHICAGO

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LITTLE PEOPLE
OF OTHER LANDS SERIES

Akimakoo, An African Boy
Little People of Japan
Little People of the Snow
Mustafa, The Egyptian Boy
Pappina, A Little Italian
Girl
Wretched Flea, A Chinese
Boy

PUBLISHED BY
A. FLANAGAN COMPANY
CHICAGO

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FEB 26 '24

©C1A778023

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AKIMAKOO MEETS THE ONE-EYED LEOPARD

(See Page 159)

The Story of Akimakoo

An African Boy

AKIMAKOO'S WISH

AKIMAKOO lay on the grass in front of his father's palace. Akimakoo was the only son of an African king. Ever since he could remember Akimakoo had lived in this beautiful forest country. He had never so much as heard of a country where there were snows and cold winds and ice-covered ponds.

Akimakoo was born one evening just at the end of the rainy season, when his home country was carpeted with the softest green. Since his birth twelve rainy seasons had passed, making beautiful the

forest. Twelve dry seasons had passed, making dry and brown the grasses. Akimakoo was now twelve and a half years old. Soon he would be old enough to buy a wife and live in a home of his own. By and by he would be king, and rule over his tribe.

But it was not of these things that Akimakoo was thinking as he lay in the cool shade of the big thick-leaved mimosa trees. Only the day before the men of the village, with wild shouts and cheers, had come in from a great hunt. They had brought with them the glossy yellow hide of the lion whose roar Akimakoo had so often heard in the night.

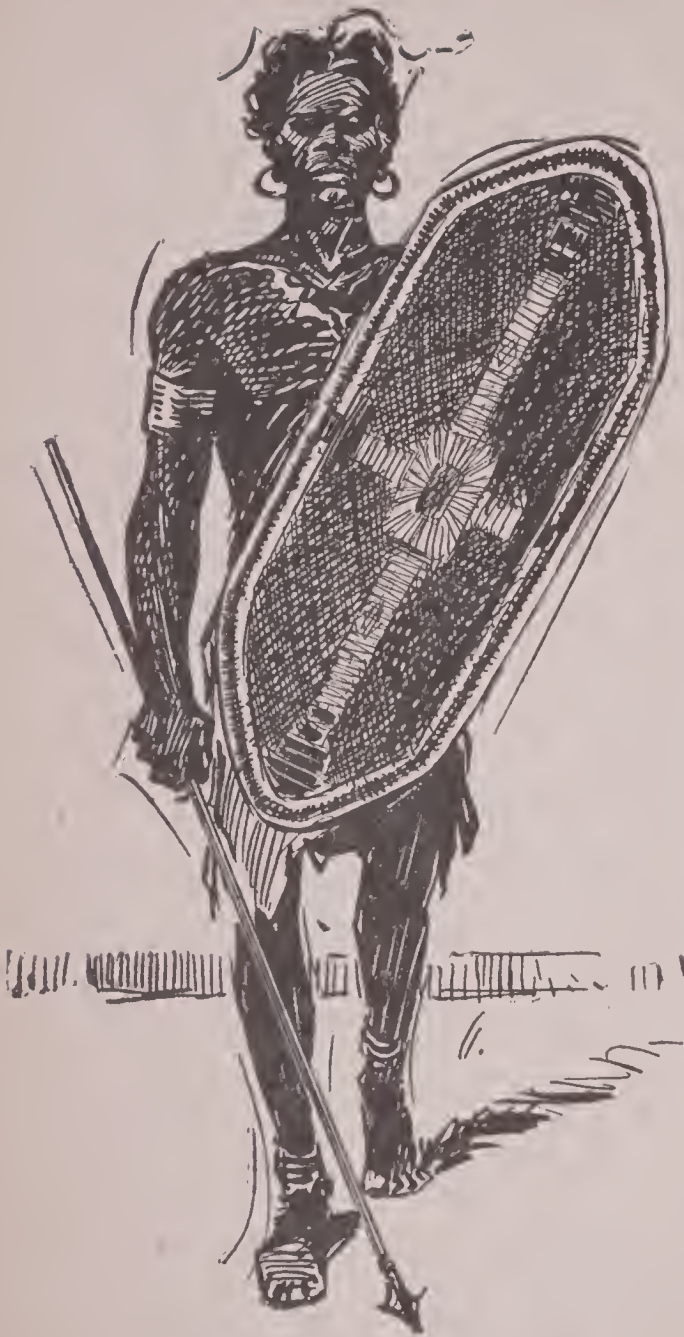
That lion was dead, and his skin covered Akimakoo's own couch. But the boy knew there were other lions in the forest.

The hunters told stories of spotted leopards, which move so stealthily through the

tall grasses and the under-brush. The hunters told of huge gorillas, which looked like huge hairy men and which fought so fiercely when attacked. The hunters told of crocodiles, which floated like old logs on the water, then suddenly opened their great jaws and closed them on their unlucky prey.

Akimakoo's eyes grew wide with wonder at each new story that the hunters told. He longed to go out into the forest and hunt with them. He wished to travel far into the forest and visit other tribes. He wished to see other parts of his country. He wished to climb the Mountains of the Moon, which the hunters told him were many miles to the northeast. He wished to cross the great rivers which flow to the sea.

But most of all Akimakoo wished to become a mighty warrior. He wished to



NYAM-NYAM

go out with other warriors and bring home provisions and slaves, and great stores of ivory.

On more than one rainy day Akimakoo had lain in a dry, sheltered place and listened to the stories which the brave old warrior Nyam-Nyam told.

On more than one sunny morning Akimakoo had watched Nyam-Nyam and his little band of hunters

and warriors hurry away on errands of war. Akimakoo admired the old warrior.

Nyam-Nyam was so tall and straight. He was so big and brown. His muscles were so strong and sinewy. He wore his bark dress so gracefully. He carried his shield so carefully. He handled his spear so skillfully.

Only the evening before, Nyam-Nyam had had a long talk with Akimakoo's father, the king. Akimakoo knew that his father and the old warrior were talking over a great journey which was soon to be made.

Nyam-Nyam was to journey farther into the unknown forest than ever before. He was to be gone many days. He was to return with immense loads of ivory. Some of the ivory was to be bought from neighboring tribes. Some was to be taken in battle if need be.

Akimakoo, who had lain in the starlight and listened, wished more than he had ever

wished for anything in his life that he might go on this journey with Nyam-Nyam. It was of this that the little boy was thinking as he lay on the grass in front of his father's palace.

At last he resolved to go bravely and ask his father if he might go. Surely, the king would not refuse! And yet the boy did not feel at all confident of his father's permission, as he walked through the long grasses which grew around the palace of the African king.

AKIMAKOO'S FATHER

THE palace of Akimakoo's father was made of bark and grasses. The roof was shingled with immense, broad leaves. The floor was of clay, pounded hard and smooth.

Perhaps you do not think this fine enough for a king's palace? Akimakoo thought it the finest building in the world. He had never seen anything finer. This was by far the largest hut in the village. It was the cleanest hut in the village. It was the best protected hut, for it stood in the very center of the village.

Moreover, the king's hut had a door. It was the only hut with a door in the whole village. For none but kings and very rich people could afford doors! Slaves had gone into the forest to cut

the tree from which this door was made. They had dragged it home. They had hewed the door out of the hard wood with their heavy, clumsy axes.

This door stood open, and Akimakoo entered.

The king was a tall, strong negro man. He sat on a square platform made of tiger-grass reeds. Over the reeds was spread a large leopard skin.

The king was almost black, for he belonged to a very dark tribe of negroes. His hair curled very tightly. His beard was braided in two long pigtails. The king's lips were thick, and his teeth were gleaming white. He smiled kindly when he saw Akimakoo in the doorway. The slave attendant thought how like his father Akimakoo was growing.

The slave spread a mat for Akimakoo. She gave him an elephant's tail with which

to brush away the troublesome flies and mosquitoes. Then the slave returned to her place behind the king. With another

elephant's tail she whisked away the insects which continually fluttered about.



AKIMAKOO'S FATHER,
THE KING

For some moments Akimakoo sat waiting for his father to speak. As he waited he noticed the crisp new bark skirt which the king wore. It was of a yellowish color and fitted neatly.

It was scant and short, as was the fashion in Akimakoo's country.

On the king's neck was a very handsome necklace. It was made of small many-colored beads, arranged in beautiful patterns. Akimakoo knew the necklace

was the work of his older sister, Kalulu. On one of the king's arms was a bead bracelet, of even a more beautiful pattern than the necklace. Akimakoo had heard his mother singing happily as she worked this bracelet for her husband, the king. On the other arm was a wooden charm which was supposed to be very powerful. It was covered with snake-skin, for good luck. It was tied to the arm by a piece of cat-skin, also for good luck.

The king's feet were bare. About his ankles and half way to his knees he wore handsome beadwork leggings. On every toe and on every finger the king wore brass and copper rings.

"How handsome my father is!" thought Akimakoo.

"How like me the lad is growing!" thought the king, as he sipped the palm wine from the little gourd cup by his side.

Then, at last, the king spoke.

“What is it you wish, my son?” he asked.

Now that the time was come, Akimakoo scarcely knew how to answer. What if his father should refuse? What if he should say that Akimakoo was too young? What if he should be angry?

Akimakoo hesitated for a moment only. Then he straightened his slim brown shoulders and stood up bravely before his father, the king.

He told his father what he longed to do and how he had listened to the words of Nyam-Nyam.

Akimakoo said to the king, “I want to be brave and fearless and venturesome like Nyam-Nyam and like you, father!”

“What have you done to prove yourself man enough to go?” asked the king.

The boy was silent for a moment. Then he said:

“It was not much, my father. But do you remember that day, two years ago, when Kalulu and I went out alone into the forest, looking for ripe pineapples? A young leopard cub spied us. I saw him creep nearer, nearer, nearer. I remembered what I had heard the hunters say. I sprang forward and struck the leopard cub in the eye. It was hurt and surprised. It turned and ran.

“It was not much to do, my father. But I was not a coward. I did not allow the cub to take my sister or me.

“But few times does my arrow fail. My muscles are as hard as the muscles of some men. I can carry my spear and my shield as Nyam-Nyam has taught me.”

The king looked at his boy very proudly. Still, he hesitated a moment before he answered. What if a wild forest beast should devour his son! What if, in battle, an-

other tribe should make him prisoner! "The king's son may not be less brave than other black boys," said Akimakoo, proudly.

"Indeed, he may not!" cried the king. "You may go out with my warriors, Akimakoo. You may prove yourself as wise and careful and watchful as Nyam-Nyam himself."

The king's son was, after all, only a little black African boy. He gave one wild whoop of joy. He turned seven somersaults in front of his father's leaf-covered palace. He stood on his head, and the sun made his brass toe-rings shine like gold. Akimakoo was very happy. Now, at last, he might prove himself a true man of the forest.

"And Akimakoo!" called his father, laughing. The boy sprang to his feet. "Look for the leopard cub with one eye."

“I will bring his skin to you if I meet him,” said Akimakoo.

“Yes, and wear the tip of his tail to bring good luck to your house,” said his father, still laughing.

MAKING READY

KALULU, who was making for him a pair of leggings like the king's, heard Akimakoo's shouts of joy. She saw his black legs, with the glittering toe-rings, waving in the air.

"What has happened, Akimakoo?" she laughed. "Are you so happy because the rainy season is over? We shall soon have to go up into the corn-lands to do our planting. Is it over that that you are laughing?"

"No," said Akimakoo. "I care nothing for digging and planting. That work is for women and slaves. *I* am going to be a great warrior," and he straightened himself up proudly.

Kalulu only laughed, and went on stringing her beads. She did not dream of his wonderful news.

“Indeed, brave warrior! And what shall you fight?” she asked, her soft black eyes twinkling with fun. “A little gentle, timid gazelle? Or an antelope, perhaps?”

Akimakoo was used to his sister’s teasing. Yet to-night he felt a little angry that Kalulu should be so slow to understand.

“My father has said I may go with Nyam-Nyam,” he said, half crossly.

“On the long journey?” cried Kalulu, her eyes wide with surprise.

“Yes,” said Akimakoo, “on the long journey. We shall travel through the dark forest. We shall cross the roaring rivers. We shall fight lions and leopards and gorillas—and—and—men—perhaps. We shall be gone for many days, perhaps for two rainy seasons. We shall bring home much ivory and many slaves. I shall be a man then, and—as brave a warrior as Nyam-Nyam.”

Kalulu still listened with wide-open eyes to her brother's boasting. Akimakoo seemed to her but a little boy, and now



AKIMAKOO'S HOME VILLAGE

he talked proudly of being a mighty warrior. Some of the blue beads fell among the grasses at Kalulu's feet.

Some of Kalulu's tears fell among the grasses, too. But she smiled again in a moment.

"Is it truly true?" she said. "Let us tell mother."

Now Yombee, the children's mother, was the head wife of the king. The king had many other wives, as is the fashion in Africa. But Yombee was the king's first wife.

The children thought their mother the most beautiful woman in the tribe. Yombee's skin was always well oiled and shining. She was always perfumed with sweet-scented grasses. Her bark skirt was never torn nor crumpled.

Around Yombee's waist there hung three chains of cowry shells. Around her neck were four bead necklaces. In her ears hung great brass rings. On her arms were brass bracelets. She wore twenty-

five brass rings on each leg. Yombee's fingers and toes were gorgeous with rings.

Yombee it was who cooked the king's food. Yombee it was who tasted each dish before the king ate of it. For Yombee was the head wife of the king, and therefore she was the most honored of women.

To her the children went with their news. Yombee was not surprised, for the king had already told her of the boy's wish. She did not weep, for she felt very certain that her boy would return at the end of one or two—or, at any rate, three—rainy seasons.

She told herself that he would be taller then, and have broader shoulders; that he would carry his spear ever so bravely; that he would be the handsomest, bravest warrior and the most fearless hunter in all Africa.

Nevertheless, Yombee looked very solemn as she hung around the lad's neck a sacred charm tied up in snake-skin.

“Remember, always, that you are a king's son,” she said. “Remember, also, that your grandfather was a king. He it was who founded our tribe. He was very brave. He burned many villages and brought home many slaves.

“Your grandfather was very wise. His people believed all that he told them. He was very rich. He had many wives. His many chests were filled with ivory, even as your father's chests are filled with ivory.

“Become as brave and wise and rich as your father and your grandfather, Akimakoo. And sometimes—sometimes—think of Yombee, your mother.”

Then Yombee hurried away, wiping her eyes on a tiny square of soft bark which she carried for a handkerchief.

Kalulu stood a moment, looking after her mother. Then she followed her into the hut, leaving Akimakoo alone.

In a moment, however, Kalulu returned, bearing a present from her mother. It was a waist chain of lion's teeth which Akimakoo had longed for ever since he was a tiny boy.

Kalulu said nothing as she gave the chain to Akimakoo. Akimakoo said nothing as he took the chain into his little black hands. It is not the fashion in that country to say: "Thank you"; but Kalulu knew that the boy was grateful.

There came such a mist over his eyes that he could scarcely see. There came such a lump in his throat that he could scarcely swallow. But he said nothing.

That evening there was to be a great feast and dance in front of the king's house.



YOMBEE MAKING MANIOC BREAD

Yombée cooked the choicest parts of the antelope and the buffalo. She made large loaves of manioc bread. Manioc is the root of a certain plant which grows in Africa. To make the bread, Yombée soaked this root in water. Then she pounded it to a paste. When the paste

was boiled it became firm and thick. Kalulu, who sat near, skinning squash seeds for the feast, listened to the jingle of Yombee's bracelets as she kneaded the manioc dough into loaves and wrapped them in large plantain leaves.

Slaves brought pineapples and big bunches of bananas, which grew wild about the village.

The king was well pleased with the feast, and as soon as the banana-leaf plates were cleared away he ordered the musicians to appear. Twelve men came in with huge drums called tom-toms. These tom-toms were pieces of tree trunks about six feet long. The inside was hollowed out, leaving the wood very thin. The ends of the drum were covered with antelope skin. At the king's order the music began. The drummers beat wildly with two heavy sticks. The people sang.

Louder and louder beat the tom-toms.
Stronger and stronger rose the voices.
Faster and faster whirled the dancers.
Sometimes the women danced alone.



THE HYENA

Sometimes the men danced alone. Sometimes the men and women danced together.

The great torches lit up the darkness of the forest. Immense bonfires caused the bodies of the dancers to glisten.

The pink dawn was beginning to glow in the east before the dance was over.

As Akimakoo crept into his bed he heard the bark of the hyena in the forest. He heard the roar of the lion by the river.

“To-morrow,” whispered the sleepy boy to the night voices, “to-morrow I shall be looking — for — you!”

THE START

IT WAS near noon when the sleepy little village awoke. Indeed, so soundly was Akimakoo sleeping that Kalulu called twice before he answered.

At last he came out into the sunshine, rubbing his sleepy eyes.

“A great warrior you will be!” laughed Kalulu, as she served the lad’s breakfast. “See Nyam-Nyam. He has been stirring for more than an hour.”

“Why did you not call me earlier?” demanded Akimakoo.

Kalulu looked solemn in an instant.

“Mother did go in,” she replied, “but when she saw you sleeping she would not disturb you. ‘Let him sleep and rest as long as he can,’ said she.”

“And what said my father?”



AFRICAN WARRIORS

“He wishes to speak with you,” Kalulu replied.

Akimakoo went at once to the shady spot where his father sat. The king was talking with several warriors, but when

Akimakoo appeared, he sent the warriors away.

“Do you still wish to go on this long journey?” asked the king.

“I still wish to go,” was the reply.

“There are many dangers, and the way is long,” said the king. “There are terrible beasts in the forest. There are terrible tribes of men in the forest. They are fierce and powerful. They love to fight. Their villages are fenced around with tall poles. On the top of every pole is a skull. Some are the skulls of beasts. Some are the skulls of men. These are the fiercest tribes in the forest. They would like nothing so well as to roast you for their supper some night.

“Do you still wish to go on this journey?” the king asked, after a pause.

“I still wish to go,” said Akimakoo.

“There are other terrors in the forest,”

the king went on. "When the dry season is fully on, you may be unable to find food. You may be unable to find water to drink. You may wander for days, starving, and dying of thirst.—Do you still wish to go on this journey?"

"I still wish to go," the boy answered.

"Very well," said the king. "If you are brave, if you are watchful, you will succeed. In all things follow Nyam-Nyam, for he is old, and wise in the forest ways. When you return it will be with chests full of ivory and cowries. Come, now, with me."

Together the two went to the hut of a very old hunter. On the branch of a tree before his doorway hung sixty-seven elephants' tails. On the roof of his hut there were elephants' skulls, tigers' skulls, gorillas' skulls.

"See," said the king, "in his hunting

days old Hasi has killed sixty-seven elephants. He has also killed many other animals. He was once the most cunning hunter in the forest.



AKIMAKOO

“Now, Hasi is old and bent and feeble. He can no longer go out to hunt. But he has four strong sons. They will go with you on this journey. They are your slaves, Akimakoo. They will care for you and serve you in all ways.”

Forth into the sunshine stepped four tall, slender negroes. Their dark bodies glistened with oil. They wore only a

little strip of soft bark about their loins. They smiled, showing their white teeth. Their front teeth were filed to a point. This was to show that they were slaves.

The four black slaves took up their bows and arrows and followed Akimakoo and his father.

Nyam-Nyam was about ready for the start. There were the long, strong ropes of twisted pineapple fibers. There were the bows and the poisoned arrows. There were the shields of wicker, woven by the women.

The shields were very thick and strong. The one made for Akimakoo by Kalulu was woven in a beautiful pattern of different colors.

The strange-looking African dogs were snapping and snarling and barking. All was now in readiness.

“Remember that Nyam-Nyam is wise

and careful," said the king again. "Learn to be like him."

Then, with but little noise of leave-taking, the hunting party moved away into the forest.

"It will be many moons before we see Akimakoo again," said Kalulu sadly. But when she looked up she saw that Yombee was already busy cooking the king's supper.

That night it was Yombee and Kalulu who listened to the bark of the hyena and the roar of the lion. They shivered, not from cold, but at the thought that their Akimakoo also was out there in the forest.

THE JOURNEY

AKIMAKOO had, of course, gone many times before for short distances into the forest. But he had never been so far but that he could return at night.

Now, the boy was perfectly happy. He dreamed of a mighty warrior who would some day return to the home village and say: "I am Akimakoo, returned." His round black eyes were always bright and eager. His sinewy black legs seemed never to tire.

On the first day the party did not travel far. They stopped soon after sunset on the bank of a little stream. There they built a huge camp fire. Over it they roasted what game they had shot on the march. After supper they lay around the camp fire and talked.

Nyam-Nyam looked up at the big, round yellow moon.

“How bright the moon is to-night!” he said.

“The night is nearly as light as day,” said Akimakoo.

Nyam-Nyam shook his head wisely.

“Never, never say that moonlight is as good as daylight, my boy,” he said. “The moon is unkind, and brings trouble into the world.”

“Tell me what you mean,” begged Akimakoo.

“Long ago,” said Nyam-Nyam, “the sun and the moon were sisters. They were of the same age. They lived together in the sky.

“Now the sun was the happy sister. Wherever she went she carried light and gladness. The moon was the discontented sister. Wherever she went she carried

unhappiness and discontent and witchery. One day the sun and the moon grew angry with each other. Over such a foolish thing they quarreled, too!

“‘I am older than you!’ cried the sun, half in fun. ‘See how much larger I am.’

“‘No!’ cried the moon, ‘you are not the elder. I may not be so large. Neither are pine needles so large as plantain leaves. Yet which are older? I may not make so glaring, blinding a light as you. That is because my people do not care for such a light.’

“‘Your people!’ said the sun scornfully. ‘Who are your people?’

“For answer the moon pointed to all the stars in the heavens.

“‘Look!’ she said. ‘Those are my people. I am not alone in the world. I am not friendless. Where, pray, are *your* people? You have no people. You are alone

in the world. You have no one to shine for.’
‘O moon, I am not alone,’ answered
the sun. ‘Look down on the earth.



THE CUNNING TIGER

There are my people. For them I shine.
I send down warmth, that their plantains
and their bananas and their manioc roots

may grow. I send down my light, that they may see their way; that they may set their nets and dig pits for the wild beasts of the forest.'

"'Your people sometimes follow me. They sometimes go out to hunt by moonlight,' said the moon.

"'O moon, there is witchery in your beams. Sometimes it is indeed true that poor, foolish men go out to hunt by moonlight. Then the cunning tiger and the sleepy-looking crocodile laugh to themselves."

"'It is true,' said the moon. 'I do bewitch your people. Your people are but my insects. If they crawl out at night-time, I send my attendants to devour them.'

"'You are cruel and unkind,' said the sun to the moon. The moon smiled broadly, and her starry attendants winked at one another.

“Beware of the moonlight, Akimakoo,” Nyam-Nyam went on; “there is witchery in her ways. She brings evil and sorrow. She brings wickedness and death. Trust to the sunlight and the firelight only. Even to-night you can see the moon smiling to her attendants on earth.”

“Yes,” said Akimakoo, “and I can see the stars winking at one another.”

“Keep close to your camp fire when you see those things,” said the wise Nyam-Nyam. “Let the leopard and the hyena walk in the moonlight.”

Then Nyam-Nyam bade the slaves heap the bonfires with wood before they lay down to sleep.

THE WARY CROCODILE

“COME,” said Nyam-Nyam, early the next morning. “Let us go on while the morning is cool. In the heat of the day we will rest.”

Akimakoo sprang to his feet at once. While the slaves were preparing to start he ran down to the river bank. How smooth and clear the water looked! How deep were the reflections of the trees in the water!

Across the river the boy saw what he thought was a piece of floating log. Now it floated along with the river current. Now it was drawn under for a time. Now it appeared again in the middle of the river, black and rough and long.

Other logs appeared and disappeared.

“I wonder,” said Akimakoo to one of

the slave hunters who had followed him, "I wonder how so many logs happen to be in the river here."

The hunter smiled, and pulled the boy back a little from the bank.

"You had better not get too near those logs," he said. "They might open their mouths and swallow you."

Akimakoo knew now in an instant what they were. He had heard the hunters tell many stories of the tricks of crocodiles.

"Watch," said the hunter. "Do you see that young antelope coming down to the river to drink? That foremost crocodile intends to have the antelope for its breakfast."

"It doesn't seem to be going after him," said Akimakoo, watching the log-like body as it floated lazily and disappeared.

It came up in a moment a few yards

nearer to the antelope. It floated lazily. It disappeared. It appeared again nearer to the antelope! Then, what seemed but a little piece of bark appeared very near indeed.

“How can it see?” whispered Akim-akoo.

“It has little eyes on the top of its flat head,” the hunter answered.

At that instant the huge jaws opened. There was a startled cry from the antelope. Then the terrible teeth snapped together, and the crocodile had its breakfast. In a few moments the great creature swam quietly away to its sunny bank. There it lay on the sand and digested its food.

But other hungry crocodiles floated like logs on the river, and the boy drew close to the hunter.

“There is little danger of the crocodile



THERE WAS A FURIOUS LASHING IN THE WATER

on land," said the hunter. "His long mud-colored body is too big and clumsy to be carried well on legs so short. He cannot run fast. He cannot turn quickly on land. It is easy for one to escape the crocodile on dry ground.

"But when he is in the water it is different. There he is very cunning. He can swim very fast. He can dart about suddenly.

"Crocodiles usually get their food as this one got the poor antelope. Many small creatures come down to the river bank to drink. They do not heed the mud-colored logs which float so quietly near them. Nor do they ever return to their forest homes.

"Fishes, too, make food for the crocodile. Often these huge creatures may be found at the mouth of streams or rivers, where fish are most sure to be plentiful.

“Unless the crocodile is hungry, he is not particularly fierce. He prefers to lie lazily in the sun and sleep. If he is attacked, however—ah, that is a different matter!”

Just then a large water bird flew near one of the floating logs. Suddenly it gave a loud cry. Caught by the legs, it was drawn under the surface of the water, and another crocodile had its breakfast.

“There is nothing so good as crocodile’s oil to keep off sunburn,” said Nyam-Nyam, coming up.

“Shall we get some this morning?” asked the slave. Nyam-Nyam nodded. Akimakoo shivered, thinking of the terrible jaws.

The slave glanced at the nearest floating crocodile. He drew a short, thick dagger from his belt. Then he slipped into the water.

“Nyam-Nyam!” cried Akimakoo, “look at the crocodile’s bony, scaly covering! The man can never pierce it with that short dagger!”

Nyam-Nyam did not answer. He was watching the three other slaves, who were running along the bank.

“Sh-h-h!” said Nyam-Nyam.

But the three hunters made no noise. They were too well trained in the forest ways for that.

Meanwhile, what had become of the first hunter? It seemed an hour to Akimakoo since he had seen the man dive. Suddenly there was a furious lashing in the water about the crocodile. The creature whirled this way and that. It lashed its tail.

“The hunter has struck from underneath,” said Nyam-Nyam. “He knows where the skin is thinnest. See! There

is the man. Look! the crocodile turns on him! It opens its great jaws——”

“Ah-h!” It was a sigh of relief from Akimakoo. For just at the right moment the hunter had raised his dagger and struck the beast twice, in the eyes.

All power seemed to leave the crocodile. In a few moments its dead body was drawn up on the river bank. Preparations were made for preserving its oil.

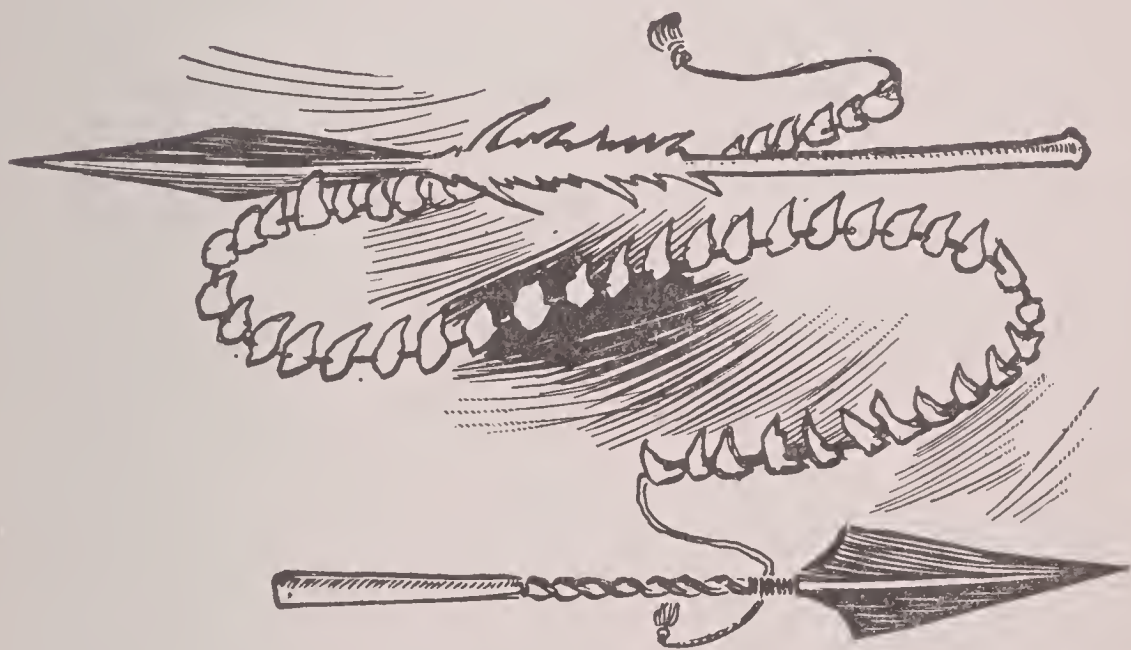
“I shall remember to strike the crocodile in the eyes,” said Akimakoo.

“Every hunter knows that trick,” said Nyam-Nyam. “Had the slave thrust his fingers into the crocodile’s eyes, it would have done as well.”

As they walked along the river bank Nyam-Nyam kicked out an egg from the sand. It was about the size of a goose egg and its shell was hard and limy.

“A crocodile’s egg,” he said. “The

mother crocodile buries her eggs in the sand where the sun will keep them warm until it is time for them to hatch. She usually lingers near, to see that no harm befalls her young. Many a mishap occurs



WAIST CHAIN OF CROCODILE TEETH, AND SPEAR HEADS

to the eggs, however. Sometimes they are eaten by animals. Sometimes they are destroyed by birds.

“If the eggs are not disturbed, the tiny

crocodiles at last break open the shell and crawl out upon the sandy beach. They at once creep toward the river. But perhaps a long-legged heron, watching for its dinner, swallows the baby crocodile. Perhaps one of the many little creatures that live along the water's edge creeps up and gobbles the poor thing before it can reach the water.

“If it does succeed in reaching the river, even in the water there are perils in store for it. There are sharp-toothed fishes just waiting for baby crocodiles. There are immense snapping turtles whose chief joy is to swallow the crocodile babies!”

The party did not march on, that day. They ate crocodile meat for dinner and for supper. They rubbed their bodies well with crocodile oil at noontime, and again at night. The next morning their

brown skins were cool and free from sunburn.

“There is nothing so good as crocodile oil for sunburn,” said Nyam-Nyam.

“There is nothing so good as crocodile meat for food,” said Akimakoo.

“There is nothing so fine as crocodile teeth for waist chains,” said the slave who had killed the crocodile, proudly rattling the new chain he wore.

THE FOREST

THE next day the party pushed on. Thicker and thicker grew the trees. Darker and darker became the shadows. This was the forest, indeed! The trees were so close together that though it was a bright, sunny day, the forest was in twilight. There was a strong wind blowing in the open. In the forest it was as quiet as in your room with the windows closed.

“We are nearing a mighty river,” said Nyam-Nyam. “See how large the trees are. That is because even during the dry season their long roots can draw moisture from the ground. The wood of some of these trees is very beautiful. It polishes easily. Some of it is pink when polished. Some is chestnut. Some is yellow.

“Do you see that little open spot on

the hill yonder? Do you see that group of beautiful trees? Those are ebony trees. Ebony never grows on low land. It never grows very near the river. But along the ridges and on top of the hills many ebony trees grow. The ebony is one of our finest trees."

Now they came nearer to the ebony trees.

"See the long, sharp-pointed leaves," Nyam-Nyam said. "Notice how dark their green is. See how they grow in clusters. They make a beautiful shade."

When the party came up close to the trees, the slaves at once went to work to cut one down. There were four trees in the group. The largest was nearly four feet in diameter. Its smooth green trunk rose straight and branchless to a height of sixty feet. Then long heavy branches shot out in all directions.

It was some time before the four trees were cut. Akimakoo stood watching the work.

“No wonder it takes you a long time to cut down those trees,” he said. “The centers are so hard.”

“The heart wood of the ebony is the hard part which the white traders are so glad to buy,” said Nyam-Nyam. “All except the very young trees are hard and black at the heart. The young ones are white and sappy in the center.

“See this large tree! That is fine ebony. Here, next the bark, are three or four inches of white, sappy wood. That is of no value. But look at the center. See how hard and black it is! Not a single white speck in the whole piece. And see how fine-grained it is—not a single flaw! How beautifully it will polish!

“This is great luck. Those strange

traders who come to our village will give us many beads for this tree."

When Nyam-Nyam looked at the smallest tree he shook his head. The black part was streaked with white. He said that tree was too young. It should not have been cut. Ebony is of no value when not pure black.

As they were not yet far from home, and the ebony is heavy to carry on a long journey, Nyam-Nyam that evening sent a party of slaves back to the home village with big loads of ebony in baskets.

These baskets were of wicker and very large and strong. The black men carried them on their backs. Each basket was held in place by a strap which ran across the forehead of the man who carried it. No slave was able to carry a very large piece of ebony, on account of the great weight.

Near the spot where the party was encamped Akimakoo discovered a vine which was strange to him. He took a leaf of it to Nyam-Nyam.

“What is this vine?” he asked.

“That is the rubber vine,” Nyam-Nyam answered. “It grows everywhere in the forest. The strange traders think that valuable, also.”

“What shall we have to eat to-day?” asked Akimakoo, who began to feel hungry. “We ate crocodile meat for breakfast, but I see no crocodiles now.”

Nyam-Nyam laughed. Then he pointed to two immense trees. They were taller even than the ebony trees.

“Oh,” cried Akimakoo in glee, “koola nuts!”

“We will eat koola nuts to-day,” said Nyam-Nyam. “They are the best nuts in the forest.”

“I would rather have koola nuts than berries or pineapples,” said Akimakoo.

“Yes, indeed; they are a much better food than fruit. They give strength to a man. No one need starve so long as there are koola nuts in the forest.”

When the party came near the trees, they saw the nuts falling one by one. Sometimes a whole cluster fell at once. Beneath the trees were a wild boar and her six little ones. How they grunted with pleasure when the nuts fell near them!

“We shall have something besides koola nuts for dinner,” said Nyam-Nyam, raising his bow and fixing the arrow.

“No!” cried Akimakoo. “Let me.”

Away flew Akimakoo’s arrow, steady and true. The old boar fell. The slaves caught the little ones.

The mother boar was roasted in a pit of coals which the slaves prepared. Very

sweet and delicious was the meat because of the wild boar's repeated feasts at the koola tree. Koola nuts are about the size and color of walnuts. Their shells are hard and thick and difficult to break. The kernel is as large as a small plum. It is white, and tastes very good.

"Eat all you like," said Nyam-Nyam. "Koola nuts never make men ill. With fruits and berries we must take care. Koola nuts hurt no one. If a man could have no other food than just thirty koola nuts a day he could keep well and strong for a long time."

Before they moved on they gathered a supply of the nuts to carry with them on the journey. They also sharpened their knives and spear-heads with the bark of the sandpaper tree. This bark is rough like a cat's tongue. The Africans often use it for sharpening their weapons.

THE LAND OF THE MOON

LONG, long before, when Akimakoo was but a small child, he had heard stories told by the hunters of the Land of the Moon. How he had longed to visit that country, where the people were so fat and comfortable, and not in the least warlike!

Now Nyam-Nyam told him that they were nearing the Land of the Moon. He said that if possible they would trade with the natives. If these people would not trade, they must fight.

“We shall buy ivory and tobacco,” said Nyam-Nyam. “We shall also buy slaves to carry these things back to our village.”

They came to higher and still higher land. Big rocks lay on every side. Sharp stones cut the travelers’ feet. All seemed dry and parched.

Steeper and more steep grew the way. Now but a narrow footpath led up the steep mountainside. Now and then a



SLAVES CARRYING HOME THE IVORY

shallow stream dashed aimlessly down the slope.

“At the top lies a smooth, even plain which just now, at the close of the rainy season, is beautiful. Later it will be bar-

ren and brown and dry," said Nyam-Nyam as they struggled on up the steep, rocky path.

At last they reached the top. In every direction stretched the high plain, broken in a few places by mountain peaks.

"This is the Land of the Moon," cried Nyam-Nyam. "Look at those funny crooked trees. The winds have twisted them so. But when we go farther inland we shall find the most beautiful country in Africa."

The next day they came to a village unlike any Akimakoo had ever before seen. It was a tiny village of straw-covered houses. Around it grew a hedge of beautiful green bushes. The bushes were so thick, and their prickly, crooked branches so interlaced, that no robber would have cared to force his way through.

"That is a milk-bush hedge," said Nyam-

Nyam. "You will find all the villages in the Land of the Moon fenced about in this way."

It was at noontime they arrived. Not a sound was to be heard in the little village. It seemed as though not even a leaf stirred.

"They are sleeping away the hot mid-day," said one of the slaves. Just then a dog barked, and the whole village seemed to awake in a moment.

Some ugly-looking negro men appeared at the village entrance. They wore ragged, dirty skin dresses. Across their foreheads were numbers of small lines, which had been made with a needle and some sort of dark dye. This dyeing of the skin is called tattooing. It hurts to feel the needle pricking, pricking, pricking. But that is a small matter, so long as it helps to make a person beautiful. Tattooing really makes the African look hideous, but it is his no-

tion of beauty. Some tribes have nearly the entire body tattooed.

These men were very black and very homely. They were large and fat. Knives were stuck in the leathern belts which they wore about their waists. One wore a necklace of curiously braided straw. Another had a band of white cow-skin about his head. Their hair hung in carefully twisted curls all about their necks.

But, though these men were horrid to look at, they were not unkind. They smiled, showing their white teeth. They had seen Nyam-Nyam before, and they knew he had come to buy their ivory and their tobacco. They invited the party to enter the village.

Some of the houses were little better than straw stacks. The very best homes were but straw roofs supported by posts.

At the entrance of the village stood a

huge carved pole. On top of the pole was an idol, which was so hideous that it made Akimakoo think of the idol which his father kept in a little sacred hut at home. The home idol had a pointed iron tongue, which stuck about two inches out of its mouth. It had a very big stomach, and glass eyes, while its face was painted red. It wore a necklace of cowry shells.



THE KING'S IDOL

Akimakoo was told that this image was very powerful, and that on dark nights it walked about and spoke. He was told that the idol caused sickness to those whom it did not love, and brought good luck and gladness to its friends.

Akimakoo's father gave the home idol food to eat. He also gave it rich gifts.

Akimakoo was surprised now when he saw this still more hideous image perched on a pole in front of the village in the Land of the Moon. But the people paid no heed to it, and Akimakoo came to believe it was not powerful, as was the home idol.

The people in the little village in the Land of the Moon made a great feast that night. There were roast chickens and goats and antelopes. There were nuts, and fruits enough for a mighty army.

At the end of the feast the women carried in immense watermelons. They cut large slices for their guests. Akimakoo thought he had never tasted anything so good as this juicy red watermelon. He ate slice after slice.

“Remember,” whispered Nyam-Nyam,

“you may eat as many koola nuts as you wish, but with *fruit* you must have a care.”

“I do not feel ill,” said Akimakoo, greedily taking another slice of watermelon.

Then again the women came to their guests, with big baskets of peanuts. Akimakoo had never tasted peanuts before. He ate and ate and ate, until he could eat no more. Then he crept off into the shade of the mimosa trees and went to sleep.

Nyam-Nyam went on talking to the village chief. For one brass kettle and one string of pink beads he bought two immense ivory tusks. For one hundred pounds of salt he bought slaves to carry the ivory back to the home village.

Nyam-Nyam also bought a funny-faced little black boy for Akimakoo. The boy's mother sold her child for a pair of earrings which she thought very beautiful. When

her son was a baby she had loved him. But now he was a big boy. Ten rainy seasons had passed since he was born. It was not strange, then, that she was glad to sell him. All African mothers feel the same. It is a custom to sell their children, and they think nothing of it.

It was with a merry twinkle of fun in his big black eyes that Nyam-Nyam led the little fellow over to where Akimakoo lay on the grass. He intended to surprise Akimakoo.

But it happened that Nyam-Nyam was the one who was really surprised. There on the grass lay Akimakoo. But he was not asleep. He was tossing and moaning and rolling in great pain. There were tears in his eyes, and the sweat stood out in beads on his forehead.

“Oh, Nyam-Nyam, I am very, very ill!” he cried.

“It is the strange fruit with the green rind and the red heart,” said Nyam-Nyam. “It is also the strange nuts, which do not grow on trees like other nuts, but under the ground like manioc roots.”

But Akimakoo did not listen. He rolled on the grass and moaned louder.

“Oh! Oh! Oh!” he cried. “A-ee! A-ee! A-ee!”

Nyam-Nyam was alarmed. He hastily mixed a drink for the boy. It was lime juice mixed with cayenne pepper. It was so hot that it brought fresh tears to Akimakoo’s eyes. He pushed the bowl away.

“Drink it,” said Nyam-Nyam sternly. “Drink every drop! It is good for you.”

When Akimakoo had finished the pepper tea he lay back on the grass. He seemed to feel both hot and cold at once. He was very miserable. “Oh, Nyam-Nyam, I shall die!” he moaned.

Then Nyam-Nyam went to the chief of the strange village. He told him of Akimakoo's illness. He told the chief that Akimakoo was a king's son.

"If he dies," said Nyam-Nyam, "the boy's father will say that you bewitched him. He will be very angry. He will come and destroy your village. He will make you his slave. What will you do, now, to relieve Akimakoo of this evil spirit?"

The chief of the village was greatly frightened. He sent in haste for the medicine man.



THE MEDICINE MAN

Soon the medicine man arrived. He was very ugly. His teeth were filed to sharp points. His head and chest and arms were painted red and blue and yellow. He wore a short skirt of grasses. On other grasses about his waist were strung six bells of iron. These jangled at every step the medicine man took.

In his right hand the medicine man carried the horn of a buffalo. It was half filled with a curious black powder which the Africans believe very powerful. In his left hand the medicine man carried a long-handled rattle of wicker. It was filled with monkeys' tails and eagles' claws and other powerful charms.

The medicine man stood over Akimakoo for a moment, very still. Then he began to leap and shout and dance. How the bells jangled! How the rattle shook! Some powder from the horn fell on Akim-

akoo. No one could understand the words of the medicine man. They were strange words, and his voice was very shrill.

Then the medicine man took a piece of colored chalk. He made a broad stripe down Akimakoo's chest. He made another stripe across the boy's aching stomach.

Finally the medicine man took a bunch of dry grass. He twisted it into the shape of a torch and lighted it. He touched the flame here and there to Akimakoo's body, calling on the evil spirit to go away. At the touch of the flame Akimakoo was able to sit up very suddenly. In fact, he leaped to his feet. He cried out that the pain was gone.

"See!" cried the men. "The medicine man has cured the king's son!"

"The medicine man has cured him!" cried the women, dancing.

“It was the curious black powder,” said one.

“It was the wonderful rattle,” said another.

“It was the dance, and the chalk marks,” said a third.

“No, it was the burning flame, which drove the evil spirit away,” said a fourth.

“I believe it was the pepper tea,” whispered Akimakoo to Nyam-Nyam. “I seem to feel its warmth through my whole body.”

“Sh-h-h!” Nyam-Nyam whispered back. “Don’t let the medicine man hear you say that!”

So whether it was by the power of the pepper tea or of the medicine man that Akimakoo was cured, you may judge for yourself.

The chief and the medicine man and the women, and even Nyam-Nyam, said

that it was an evil spirit which had bewitched Akimakoo and made him suffer. But Akimakoo judged that the evil spirit must have been in the watermelon and the peanuts. He made up his mind that he would not be so greedy again.

“Be wary of strange fruits and strange people,” said Nyam-Nyam, wisely.

After resting and trading for a week the little party set out once more.

“We have wasted much time in the Land of the Moon,” said Akimakoo, as they clambered down the rocky path.

“Not so,” answered Nyam-Nyam. “We must make haste slowly in our country. We cannot travel every day. We cannot hunt every day. If we did that, we should soon die. We must rest, and be careful that we do not do too much in the heat.”

CAMP-FIRE STORIES

A FEW nights later dark clouds scurried across the sky. Big drops of rain began to fall, causing the slaves to heap higher the bonfires.

“It is good,” said Nyam-Nyam; “I am glad to have the rain fall. It is so seldom that the rains come during the dry season.”

“What makes the rainy season, Nyam-Nyam? What makes the dry season?” asked Akimakoo.

“I am not sure that it is true, but I will tell you the story which I have heard all my life.”

Then the slaves and the warriors clustered about Nyam-Nyam, and listened to the story, which most of them had heard a hundred times before.

“As you know,” Nyam-Nyam began,

“the rainy season begins in September and does not end until May.

“I know a man who is a great traveler. He once went as far as the mouth of the Kongo River. There he met strange men with white faces, and eyes the color of the sky. Their home was across the big waters. In their land, he says, a white rain falls during a part of the year. It lies in drifts among the trees. It almost covers their houses.

“The white men call their rainy season winter. The white rain they call snow. When the white rain vanishes they say summer has come. They are strange—those men with white faces and white rain.”

“But the story?” begged Akimakoo.

“Long ago,” said Nyam-Nyam, “two brothers wandered over the world. The name of one was Nchango. He is now

the wet season. The name of the other brother was Enomo. He is now the dry season.

“One April day the two brothers met in the African forest. For weeks and weeks Nchango had been sending down torrents of rain. For weeks and weeks Enomo had been piercing the rain clouds with his arrows, and sending down long shafts of light.

“‘I am stronger than you,’ boasted Enomo.

“‘Nay, I am stronger than you,’ replied Nchango.

“‘Indeed, it is not so!’ cried Enomo.

“‘I am stronger than you,’ repeated Nchango.

“Then, there, in a forest of clouds, the two brothers fought, to prove which was stronger. The people of the air watched and listened.

“From May till September the brothers

fought. It seemed, indeed, that Enomo was the stronger. He sent down to earth long, straight shafts of light. He turned the grass brown, and the leaves yellow. Everything was parched and all but lifeless. The dry season was on.

“Then, one day in September, Nchango roused himself afresh. He hurled great clouds at his brother. He shot his white arrows at him. The beating of his tom-tom could be heard over all the land. The wet season was here.

“‘Ha! now which do you think is stronger?’ he cried. But his brother just poked his face through the clouds and smiled. ‘My turn will come,’ he said to the people of the air. And Enomo’s turn did come.

“For years and years and years the brothers have struggled. Longer ago than any man can remember, the fight began.

And just so long as the rainy season and the dry season follow each other, so long will the brothers fight together.”

“And which is the stronger?” asked Akimakoo.

“Indeed, we cannot tell which is the stronger,” said Nyam-Nyam. “It has not yet been proved.”

For a few moments after the story was told there was silence in the camp. Nothing was heard save the raindrops pattering on the leaves, and their soft hiss as they sometimes struck the fire.

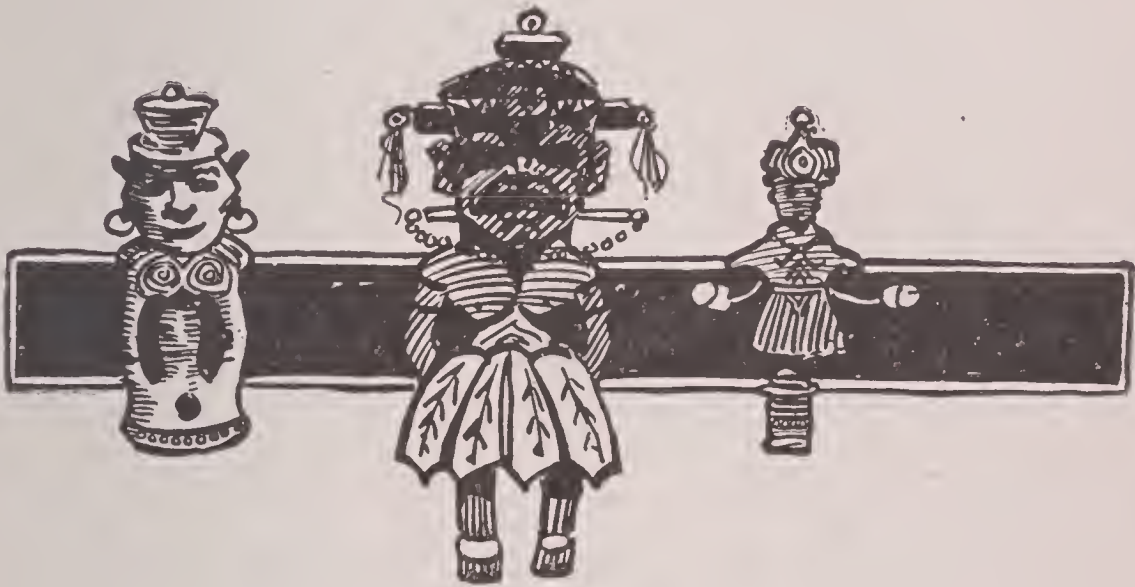
“Tell us another story,” said Akimakoo. “It makes me think of home. Don’t you remember how we often sat and told stories the whole night long?”

“Yes,” said Nyam-Nyam, “but then we could sleep all of the next day.”

But Nyam-Nyam drew Akimakoo close to him. He feared the lad was growing

homesick, and that would never do. So this is the story Nyam-Nyam told to make Akimakoo laugh:

Once an African king had a most beautiful daughter. The name of the princess



AFRICAN CHARMS TO WARD OFF EVIL

was Aronda. She had big black eyes and round cheeks. She smiled always, and was never cross or selfish.

Aronda wore beautiful brass rings in her ears, and a handsome iron ring in her

nose. She wore six chains of pink beads around her neck, and six chains of cowries around her waist. She wore so many heavy anklets on her legs, and so many rings on her toes, that she could scarcely walk.

This princess could make better manioc bread than any other woman of the tribe. She could cook monkey meat so it tasted like chicken. Indeed, Aronda was a wonderful girl. Many an African chief came to the village, to try to buy her for his wife.

“No,” replied Aronda’s father, “I will not sell Aronda for ivory. I will not sell her for many slaves. No man is rich enough to buy my daughter.”

“How, then, *may* we win her?” asked the African chiefs, for Aronda was very beautiful. “What can we do to win your daughter?” they asked.

“There is but one way,” said Aronda’s father.

“Tell us,” begged the African chiefs.

“He who takes Aronda for his wife must make a bargain with me.”

“What is it! What is it?” they cried, eagerly.

“He must agree that when Aronda falls ill, he also will fall ill. He must promise that when Aronda dies, he also will die.”

The African chiefs returned alone to their African villages. Aronda remained with her father. Days and weeks passed. No one came to ask for Aronda in marriage.

After many days a bold hunter came to Aronda’s village.

“What is your name?” asked Aronda’s father.

“They call me The-man-who-never-

goes - twice - to - the - same - place," was the answer.

"What do you wish here?" asked Aronda's father.

"I wish Aronda for my wife. She is very beautiful. She can make good manioc bread, and she can cook monkey meat so that it tastes like chicken."

"Ah!" said Aronda's father, "but will you agree to fall ill when Aronda falls ill?"

"I will agree," was the answer.

"Will you promise that when Aronda dies you also will die?"

"I will promise."

That very day Aronda became the wife of The-man-who-never-goes-twice-to-the-same-place. They lived in a little hut near her father.

Aronda and her husband were very happy together. Aronda's father was well pleased with his daughter's husband.

Aronda's husband was a great hunter. One day he went out into the forest and killed two wild boars. One he kept for himself and Aronda. The other wild boar he carried as a present to the king.

"Ah!" said the king, "I am exceedingly fond of wild boar. Go, and kill another for me."

Aronda's husband shook his head.

"My father gave me a law," he answered. "It was that I should never go twice to the same place."

On another day Aronda's husband went down by the river to hunt. He killed two tender young antelope as they came down to the water to drink.

One antelope he kept for himself and Aronda. The other he carried to the king.

"Oh," said the king, "I am very fond of antelope meat. Please, please, go, and bring me another."

Aronda's husband shook his head.

"My father gave me a law," he said. "It was that I should never go twice to the same place."

The king was pleased with Aronda's husband. Aronda was pleased with him.

But the king wondered if he would keep his promise if Aronda should fall ill. Aronda did not doubt. She was sure that he would prefer to fall ill when she fell ill; to die when she died.

One day her husband brought home some bark for which Aronda had long wished. It was beautiful, soft, crinkly bark, and it was very difficult to get.

Aronda was sure that her husband loved her dearly. She sang as she cut herself a new skirt of the bark. She sang as she fitted it, and as she made the fringe around the bottom. Her many bracelets jingled merrily as she worked.

Then suddenly Aronda's song ceased. Her bracelets were quiet. Aronda lay back among the plantain leaves quite still.

"What is the matter, Aronda?" asked her husband.

"Oh, my head aches," Aronda answered. "I feel very ill."

"Oh, Aronda," he cried, "do not be ill! If you are ill, I also shall suffer!"

But Aronda's head grew no better. Her husband tied a leaf bandage about her forehead. In a moment he tied one about his own forehead.

Side by side they sat and suffered.

Soon Aronda lay stretched out, stiff and lifeless. When the king found his daughter, her husband lay by her side.

"He kept his promise," said the king, weeping.

They carried Aronda and her husband

to the sandy burying ground. There they dug a hole.

Beside Aronda they placed a tusk of an elephant, some rings, some mats and some plates.

Beside her husband they placed his spear, his hunting bag and his knife. They also put in a slave as attendant. When the grave was covered over, there was a mound of sand.

“No, no!” cried the king. “Do not leave a mound. Do you not know how the leopards and the hyenas prowl about this place? You must dig a deeper hole.”

Therefore the slaves took Aronda and her husband up. They dug the hole deeper. They put Aronda and her slave and her rings and mats and plates into the deeper hole. Then they turned to Aronda’s husband.

Aronda's husband was seen to shake his head. Then he spoke:

"My father gave me a law," he said. "It was that I should never go twice to the same place."

Then Aronda's husband gathered up his knife and his spear and his hunting bag, and The-man-who-never-goes-twice-to-the-same-place was never again seen in the village.

FOODS FROM THE FOREST

ONCE, in the heat of the day, the party lay under an immense baobab tree.

“This tree might serve as a palace,” said Akimakoo.

And the boy was quite right in what he said. The branches of the tree stretched at least seventy-five feet on every side of the trunk. The outer edges touched the ground.

When the tree was in bloom its great white clusters of blossoms hung on stems a yard long. Then, indeed, it was a tent-like palace covered with flowers. Now the fruit was ripe. It hung on the stems where the white blossoms had hung. The fruit was the size of a muskmelon.

“Oh, see the monkey-bread! See the monkey-bread!” shouted Akimakoo, when

he saw the melon-like fruit of the baobab tree. For "monkey-bread" is the name by which Africans call it.

The fruit was sweet and juicy, and Akimakoo thought it very good. He squeezed some of the juice into his gourd cup, and drank it as we drink lemonade. The drink proved very refreshing.

That day the slaves cooked some of the leaves of the baobab tree with their meat. Nyam-Nyam said this would keep away fever and other diseases. He likewise gathered some of the bark, to carry along as medicine.

Just as they were ready to eat their dinner, some slaves came in, shouting and laughing. They bore a strange kind of fruit. It was butter fruit, which grows on a remarkable tree called the "butter tree." Akimakoo spread some of the butter fruit on his manioc bread, just as you spread

butter on bread. Akimakoo thought it very fresh, sweet butter.

Besides "monkey-bread" and tree butter, Akimakoo had gingerbread for his dinner. It was not gingerbread such as your mother makes and bakes in the oven. Akimakoo's gingerbread grew on a gingerbread tree. This is a kind of palm tree which grows to an immense height. Its leaves are large and fan-shaped. From these leaf-fibers ropes are sometimes twisted.

The gingerbread was not served in slices. It grew in nice round balls about the size of an orange. The outer skin was red and thick. Akimakoo pulled this off. Ah! then he came to the real gingerbread. It was thick and spongy and sweet. Indeed, it looked very like our own gingerbread. In the center was one hard, glass-like seed.

“Oh!” cried Akimakoo to all who were eating the fruit, “be sure to save the seeds. Kalulu has long wished for a necklace made of these seeds. They are so shiny and glass-like, she says.”

So the seeds were carefully saved for a necklace for Kalulu.

“I wonder what Kalulu is doing now,” said Akimakoo thoughtfully.

“Oh,” laughed Nyam-Nyam, “that is an easy question to answer! Kalulu is watching the slaves dig ground-nuts from the farm lands. It is just the time now to dig ground-nuts.”

“What queer nuts those are!” said Akimakoo. “First comes the trailing vine, with its tiny yellow flowers. By and by the yellow blossoms fade. The petals fall. Then a tiny pod begins to form. The pod grows larger.

“As it grows, the pod bends its head

lower and lower. At last it touches the ground. It grows heavier and heavier, for the green nuts are all the time growing larger. The stem is slender, and unable to bear the weight. So at last the nut buries itself in the ground. There it ripens.

“How often,” Akimakoo went on, “I have sat and watched the slaves as they dug ground-nuts! How lazily they used their long pronged forks! How slowly they picked the nuts from the vines and spread them out to dry!”

“Yes,” said Nyam-Nyam, “and how good the ground-nuts tasted when they were carefully roasted by Kalulu.”

“Or when Yombee, my mother, beat them into meal and made porridge of them,” added Akimakoo. “I wish—”

“Omemba! Omemba!” shouted a slave.

At that shout Akimakoo sprang to his

feet. “Omemba” meant snake! Where was it?

There, hanging from a branch of the baobab tree was a huge python. At the



A PYTHON KILLING ITS PREY

sound of the shout the reptile dropped to the ground. It would have hurried away to a place of safety, but the slaves sprang

at the python with their knives, and it soon lay dead.

When measured, the snake was found to be thirty feet long. Its skin was tough and thick. The meat was used for food. The Africans think it very good, though I doubt if we should care for it.

The Africans are not much afraid of the snakes which are so plentiful in their woods. African snakes very seldom attack a man.

The huge python hangs from the branches of trees and waits for its prey. If some antelope or other animal happens to pass, the python drops upon it. It coils itself round and round the luckless creature and slowly squeezes the life out of it. Then the great snake swallows its dinner at one mouthful. Thus gorged, it creeps off to digest its food.

It seems strange that, though this snake

often captures much larger creatures, it seldom attacks man.

The python has no poison fang, and its only way of obtaining food is slowly to crush the life out of the unlucky animal which comes in its way.

There are other, smaller, snakes in the African forest. These have poison fangs. They, however, are very easily alarmed. They run at the first approach of danger. They feed only on birds and squirrels. So the natives are not much afraid of even these poisonous snakes.

There is a huge water snake which may often be seen floating on the streams or rivers. Sometimes it lies quietly coiled on a branch or vine beneath the water. It feeds on fish and other small water creatures.

There is one little insect which Africans fear more than they do snakes. They are

more cautious of disturbing it than they are of disturbing many large animals. It is the eloway fly. Its clay nest is bottle-shaped, and filled with tiny holes, which are entrances to the home. This clay nest is usually hidden among the thick leaves of the trees. Most often it overhangs the waters of a stream or river. The clay of the nest is remarkably hard. It is almost impossible to break it.

“We never try to break the nest of an eloway fly,” said Nyam-Nyam. “Indeed, anyone would know better than to disturb that little creature. Its attack is too powerful to be pleasant. The sting leaves so much poison in the wound as to make it very painful.”

“Yes,” said one of the slaves, rubbing his arm; “do you see this swelling? It is now three days since I accidentally brushed against an eloway’s nest. Instantly I dived

beneath the water, for I knew the flies would not follow me there. But I was not quick enough. One fly went under the water on my right arm.

“I swam for some distance under water. When I crawled out at a safe distance from the nest that little fly was still on my arm. In fact, I was obliged to pull it loose. Ever since then my arm has pained me. Sometimes it does not ache so badly, but about once in an hour the poison seems to gain force. Then it throbs and burns fearfully.

“Keep away from eloway nests, Akim-akoo. If you should be so unlucky as to disturb one, dive beneath the water. It is your only hope of escape. You will not need to swim far, for the eloway never follows for any distance.”

“Be watchful, also, of the spiders,” said Nyam-Nyam. “Their poison, too,

is sometimes very powerful. Their nests may be seen spread on almost every bush."

"Yes," said Akimakoo, "and these webs are very strong. This morning I saw a bird caught so fast in a spider's web that it could not escape. The forest seems full of dangers."

"Yes, the forest life is full of dangers. But, after all, it is the finest life in the world. Wait until we meet with some of the big beasts of the woods. Then you will know the real joy and the real danger of being an African hunter."

"Excepting the crocodile, we have met with no large beasts," said Akimakoo.

The slave who sat nearest the lad smiled, showing his pointed teeth.

"I think you will not have to say that at this time to-morrow," he said.

"Why?"

"There are elephants about here. As I

was going through the underbrush I saw signs of them. They have broken a path through the forest. To-morrow we shall have sport."

"Elephants!" cried Akimakoo.

"Ivory!" cried Nyam-Nyam.

"Sport!" said the slave.

THE ELEPHANT HUNT

“WHAT did the hunter mean when he said that he knew elephants were about?” asked Akimakoo.

For answer Nyam-Nyam showed the boy a path leading through the jungle. The thick underbrush was trampled. The larger, stiffer branches of the trees were broken.

“Only elephants can make such a path through the jungle,” said Nyam-Nyam. “Only their tough sides could break those branches. Only their immense feet could trample that underbrush. The great creatures march along single file. Many a path do they break for us through the forest.”

“It seems almost cruel to kill the big, sleepy beasts,” said Akimakoo. “They

never harm anyone. They are peaceful and quiet."

"Their ivory is valuable," said Nyam-Nyam.

"Come! Come!" cried the hunters, impatiently. "It is quite time we were off."

Then, carefully following the path which the elephants had made, they plunged into the forest.

The party went forward very quietly, that they might not frighten the huge beasts away. For one hour they followed the trail—two hours—three hours. Akim-akoo's slim black legs began to tire. He grew impatient, and was on the point of telling the hunters they were surely mistaken.

"Sh-h-h!" said the foremost hunter just then.

"Sh-h-h! Listen!" said another.

The whole party stopped. In a mo-

ment the sound came again. It was the trumpeting of a herd of elephants.

“They are not fighting,” said one hunter. “The trumpeting is too soft for that. I fancy they have found some food which they like. Elephants have a habit of making that soft sound of contentment and satisfaction. Let us be very careful not to alarm them.”

Softly now they crept forward. Soon the party came in sight of the herd. The elephants were feeding from a group of plantain trees. There is nothing of which the elephant is so fond as the leaves and fresh fruit of the plantain tree. It was no wonder, then, that the great voices were murmuring contentment.

With their long trunks the elephants reached for the freshest leaves and the best of the fruit. One lazily scratched his head against the rough trunk of a tree. An-

other grasped a slender tree with his trunk and shook it over his head to brush the flies away. When they set down their huge feet the branches crackled and broke. When they walked their feet made such a booming sound that it seemed as though an army marched.

One big fellow, at least ten feet high, was the master of the herd. Every elephant herd has its captain or master. All the other elephants of the herd follow him. Sometimes two elephants fight for the mastery of a herd. It is a wonderful sight to see the mighty beasts fight. They squeal and trumpet fiercely. They charge at each other with their sharp, heavy tusks.

The elephant's hide is very thick, but sometimes it is sadly torn in a fight. Sometimes the sharp tusks of one elephant are driven into his foe's side to a great depth. It is like a double sword thrust, and the

poor beaten elephant bleeds to death. At the beginning of a fight the elephants always charge at each other with lowered heads. These huge heads come together with such force that they give forth a booming sound.

When the fight is ended, he who comes off victor is master of the herd. The defeated one, if not too badly hurt, wanders off alone into the forest in search of other herds to conquer. Or, if very badly wounded, he lies down and dies, while the victor proudly marches away with the whole herd following him.

Sometimes hunters find elephants' tusks lying in the forest. You would wonder why valuable ivory had been left so carelessly. But the African hunters will tell you that these tusks are but the remains of some poor fellow that was beaten in the fight, and died alone in the forest.



THE ELEPHANTS

When Nyam-Nyam saw the herd of elephants feeding peacefully, he gave a low whistle. It sounded like a bird's note, but the hunters on hearing it at once dropped to the ground. They crept back among the trees very silently.

“Why are you running away?” whispered Akimakoo in a disappointed tone.

Nyam-Nyam laughed.

“Watch,” he said. “Watch and see, my boy.”

It was nearly noontime, and the sun beat down furiously hot about the young plantain trees. For a little while longer the elephants ate of the green leaves. But presently they began to grow warm and sleepy. They lay down one by one in the shady places. When the hunters saw this their eyes shone with excitement. It was just what they had been waiting for. They now crept forward like snakes. Not a

sound did they make, but their bright knives gleamed in the sunlight.

The master of the herd lay nearest. He was fast asleep, with his head facing the hunters. One of his mates lay near him. She was but resting, and placidly switching away the flies.

“We shall get them both,” whispered the hunters as they crept nearer.

Slowly, silently, the hunters neared the huge beasts. Then, quick as a flash, they sprang up.

One hunter lifted his big sharp knife in both hands. With all his strength he struck the trunk of the sleeping elephant. By that one cruel stroke the trunk was cut off. The poor bewildered elephant struggled to his feet. But between pain and surprise he knew not what to do.

Meanwhile his mate fared no better. At the moment that the master of the herd

lost his trunk she felt a sharp pain in her hind leg, just above the heel. She sprang up. But she could not run, and she felt the slash of the knife again. The sinews of her other hind leg were cut. She fell to the ground, trumpeting and squealing loudly.

So there in the hot sunshine the master elephant and his mate bled to death, while the rest of the herd fled through the forest. The hunters were wild with joy. It was not often that they caught two elephants so easily.

There is much danger in elephant hunting. Sometimes the wounded elephant charges upon the hunter. Then the hunter must be nimble and cool-headed indeed if he wishes to escape.

That afternoon the slaves dug a deep pit almost a yard square. They filled the pit with wood and started a roaring fire.

“Oh, I know what you are going to do!” shouted Akimakoo. “We shall have elephant’s foot for supper.”

The slaves nodded and grinned.

“Well, not for supper to-night,” they said. “Perhaps it will be done for to-morrow’s supper.”

Soon the hole was very hot and there was a fine bed of coals in the bottom. Then the slaves brought the enormous hind foot of the master elephant. They dropped it on the hot coals, and covered it with green wood and damp grasses. Over all this they put mud, which they tramped down firmly, so that no heat could escape. Then they left the foot to bake. They rested and told stories for the rest of the day.

The next morning bright and early the little party was at work. They were to remove the elephants’ tusks. This was no

easy task, for they were deeply imbedded in the skull. It was with knives and axes that the slaves finally chopped the tusks loose. They carried the four tusks to Nyam-Nyam.

The master elephant's tusks were the larger. One of them weighed ninety-two pounds. The other weighed eighty-seven pounds. Those of the smaller elephant weighed about fifty pounds apiece. It is said that an elephant's tusks are never both of exactly the same size and weight.

Besides the tusks the hunters also saved some of the elephants' teeth. These might be carved into beautiful rings, the hunters said.

Nyam-Nyam kept the tail of the master elephant for himself. Akimakoo waved the tail of the other elephant about his head for many days. There is nothing so good to drive away the flies as elephants' tails.

The hairs are so long and coarse that there is no escape for the flies, which become entangled.

That night the slaves uncovered the fire hole, and lifted out the elephant's foot. It was beautifully roasted. The thick sole and the tough skin dropped off. There lay the meat, tender and juicy.

"Ah," said Nyam-Nyam, when they had eaten all they wished, "we still have meat enough for our breakfast. One elephant's foot is enough to feed fifty men. There are but twenty-five of us."

HOW AN ELEPHANT WAS SAVED A FABLE

THAT evening the hunters stretched themselves out early for sleep, for they were very tired. But sleep did not come to Akimakoo. He was much too excited to sleep. He tossed and tumbled and wished for morning to come.

One of the slaves who lay near Akimakoo also was awake. He had received a scratch from a thorn tree during the day. The wound was hot and throbbing. Akimakoo rubbed the slave's arm with a little palm oil. Then he bound a fresh, thick leaf over the scratch. It cooled the feverish spot and the slave was grateful.

"Why do you not sleep?" asked the slave.

"I can do nothing but think of the ele-

phants we killed to-day," said the boy. "I wonder why no elephants ever fell into the pit behind our home village. Once in that pit, no elephant would ever have a chance to escape, I think."

"I know a story of an elephant that did escape from the pit into which it fell," said the slave. "Would you like to hear the story?"

"Yes, yes!" whispered Akimakoo. He crept up close to the slave. They talked in whispers, so that the others might not be awakened.

"Once a huge, long-tusked elephant was wandering in the forest," said the slave. "Here and there the elephant stopped to eat of the juicy leaves. Presently he saw a whole group of the plants of whose leaves he was most fond. The elephant hurried forward. But he never reached the plants. He fell into a deep, deep pit."

“‘Alas!’ cried the elephant, as he turned and rolled helplessly. ‘Alas! now my life is over. Soon the hunters will come and shoot their arrows into me. They will cut me with their sharp knives. I shall die!’

“Just then a large eagle alighted on the branch overhead.

“‘Oh,’ sighed the elephant, ‘if you could only help me out!’

“‘I cannot lift you out,’ said the eagle. ‘But I can carry a message. If you have ever done a kind deed for any one, send for him. He will come and help you out.’

“The elephant laughed, even in the midst of his trouble.

“‘I have helped no one who can now help me,’ he said. ‘Once the King of the Rats and his whole family were caught by some little black boys. The boys put the King of the Rats into one jar of water, and his family into another jar. Then they

left the two jars side by side and ran off to play.

“‘When I came along,’ said the elephant. ‘I broke the jars. The Rat King and his family were free. But the Rat King could never help me!’

“‘Nevertheless, I shall go and tell him that you are in trouble,’ replied the eagle, flying away.

“A gaily-colored parrot now flew near. It saw the elephant in the pit, and stopped.

“‘Ah,’ chattered the parrot, ‘are you the elephant who helped the Queen of the Parrots last year?’

“‘Yes,’ said the elephant. ‘Some black women put the Queen of the Parrots into a cage. They hung the cage outside their hut. I came along and saw the poor prisoner. She was very unhappy, and wished to fly back to the forest. I broke the cage and set the Parrot Queen free.’

“‘I will go and tell our queen that you are in trouble,’ said the parrot:

“‘What can a parrot do to help an elephant out of a pit?’ groaned the elephant, in despair. But the parrot had already flown away.

“For fully an hour the elephant turned and twisted in his narrow prison. But the pit was deep and he only tired himself. He could not get out. By and by he heard the patter, patter, patter of many feet. At first he thought it was the black men coming for him. He struggled more fiercely to escape. Then he listened again.

“No! No black men ever made that tiny patter, patter, patter when they ran. It was the King of the Rats and all of his people.

“‘I have come to help you out of the pit,’ said the Rat King.

“‘O Rat King,’ said the elephant, ‘you

mean well, my friend. But you cannot help me.'

“Then there was a whirring, fluttering sound in the air. The sky was darkened



THE PARROT QUEEN

by a million pairs of wings. The Queen of the Parrots had arrived, with all of her subjects!

“‘I have come to help you out of the pit, my friend,’ said the Parrot Queen.

“‘O Parrot Queen,’ said the elephant, ‘you mean well, my dear. But you cannot help me.’

“The Queen of the Parrots gave an order. Her million subjects began to break branches and leaves from the trees and throw them into the pit.

“The King of the Rats gave an order. His million people began to dig at the edge of the pit. They gnawed and nibbled, nibbled and gnawed. And as they gnawed they threw the earth into the pit.

“‘You little creatures can never get me out!’ still moaned the elephant.

“Then the million parrots flew faster. The million rats dug more quickly. Very soon the pit was filled. The elephant was able to walk quietly away into the forest.

“So it happened that the black men did not sell the ivory of that elephant’s tusks. The black women did not have that ele-

phant's tail with which to whisk flies from the dinner table."

"I wonder if that story is true," said Akimakoo sleepily.

But the slave did not answer.

FOREST BIRDS

ONE day a hunter brought Akimakoo a bird. It had soft gray feathers and a scarlet-tipped bill. Its beak was strong and curved. Akimakoo grew very fond of the gray bird and always kept it near him.

One morning very early the boy was awakened by hearing his name called, over and over again. He opened his eyes and looked about. No one was stirring. He lay down once more to sleep. Hardly were his eyes closed when he heard the sound again:

“Akimakoo! Oh, Akimakoo!” called a mocking voice from the branches above him. He looked up and there sat—his gray bird with the scarlet-tipped bill!

“Your parrot is learning to talk,” said one of the slaves, laughing.

To be sure! Akimakoo had nearly forgotten how well these gray parrots can learn to speak. They are said to be the most valuable of parrots because they learn so readily. After this Akimakoo never grew tired of teaching his parrot new words.

I think his pet bird made him look more carefully at the other birds of the forest. One day he looked up into a tree and there he saw a nest big enough for a hundred birds. From the nest flew a bird.

“What bird is that, Nyam-Nyam?” asked the boy.

“That is a grosbeak. See its thatched straw hut. Do you notice how the roof spreads out over the edge of the nest? Because of that roof no snake or other reptile can get into the nest. The doorways are just under the eaves, but you cannot see them unless you look very carefully.

“Not for one pair of birds was this nest built. Sometimes hundreds of birds live in these thatched-roof bird houses. There are halls inside, and from these halls open the nests of the different families.

“The nests of the grosbeak are not built for one season only. Year after year the birds come back to the same old house at nesting time. Little by little they add to the house as more room is needed. I have seen boughs completely covered with these nests. I have seen trees broken down by their weight.

“These birds are wonderful little workers. All day long they may be seen darting hither and thither. They select only fine grasses to weave into the house.”

“It is surely a wonderful bird’s nest,” said Akimakoo.

On another day Akimakoo found the nest of a tailor-bird. It was made of liv-

ing green leaves. The leaves were sewed together with threads from spiders' webs. The nest with its tiny opening swung softly in the breeze. The little father and mother tailor-birds flitted proudly in and out.

But no less proud were the families of African weavers living close by in the forest.

Different families of weavers use different material. Some use coarse straw. Some use fine, tough stems of grasses. Some use the fine fibers of plants and trees.

One pair of these yellow-capped birds had woven a firm nest of grass-stems. They lined it with leaves which exactly fitted in place. They hung the nest at the end of a twig. There their tiny nestlings rocked, secure from all harm.

"Ah, there is a korwé bird," said one

of the slaves, as they were traveling along one day. "I should like to show its nest to you, Akimakoo."

"Why?" asked Akimakoo.

"Because it is built in such a queer fashion. Look closely at all the tree trunks. If you see a small heart-shaped hole in any tree, call me."

They went along silently for some time. Then Akimakoo cried out:

"There, there is a hole, but it is only a tiny slit, and not nearly big enough for a bird to go through."

The slave laughed.

"Yet that is the korwé's nest," he said. "When the nest is first built inside the tree, an opening is left so that the birds may pass in and out. But by and by the nest is finished. The white, pigeon-like eggs are laid in the nest.

"Then the mother korwé must keep

the eggs warm. She must not leave them. In order that all may be quite safe, the father korwé plasters up with clay the hole by which the mother korwé entered. He leaves just a tiny slit through which he may feed her.

“The mother bird is quite happy in her home prison. She lines the nest with her own soft feathers. Then she waits patiently for the eggs to hatch.

“By and by the babies appear. But they are still too little to fly. The mother korwé does not leave them. The father korwé’s wings are never weary. He brings food now for the mother and babies too. Indeed, before the babies are ready to fly, Father Korwé becomes quite thin and weak.

“When the corn is ripe, and the young birds are fully fledged, they and their mother pick the plaster from their doorway

and come out. The mother and her young ones wander in the corn fields. They now can procure their own food. But alas for poor Father Korwé! Sometimes at the end of this long period of hard work he is too weak to go with his family. At the first heavy rain he becomes numb and cold, and falls to the ground. Thus, very often the father korwé gives his life for his family."

IENN*

“WE must be more watchful than ever now,” said Nyam-Nyam one day. “We do not wish to fall into the hands of the cannibals. They are the men who eat other men. We do not care to serve as their breakfast some morning.”

“Ah,” said the slaves, shivering with fear, “we are near their country now. If they discover us we shall never escape.”

“Nonsense!” said Nyam-Nyam. “Do we not wear powerful charms? They will keep us from harm. Do not fear. Sit down, and I will tell you a pleasant little cannibal story.”

This is the story which Nyam-Nyam told:

Shimba was a rich cannibal chief. He

* Ienn means mirror.



THE CANNIBAL CHIEF SHIMBA

had eight new houses. He had thirty chests filled with cowries and ivory and beads.

Now Shimba had made a vow which he was bound to keep. He had sworn to eat any man who should quarrel with him. It happened that Shimba had many enemies. They all quarreled with him. One after another Shimba ate them.

At length Shimba was left alone in his kingdom. Then he went to a neighboring tribe, seeking a wife. There it was that he met the beautiful Ienn. Ienn was the only daughter of the neighboring chief, and she was very lovely.

So Shimba married the lovely Ienn just at the beginning of the rainy season. He took her with him to his home village, which was now deserted and lonely. Shimba loved his wife very dearly. Every morning he rose early and went out into the forest

to trap wild animals. Every evening he came home with meat and fruit and nuts for Ienn.

Now Ienn had three brothers. They hated Shimba bitterly. They were angry when they knew that Shimba had married their sister.

“I will go and bring Ienn home,” said the eldest brother.

Shimba was away when the brother arrived. The brother wished to carry Ienn away at once. But she declared herself quite happy, and would not go with him. While they were talking, Shimba came home. He was very, very angry. He quarreled with Ienn’s eldest brother, and—*kept his vow*.

In a few days Ienn’s second brother came to carry Ienn home. He fought with Shimba for long, long hours. In the end Shimba won the fight, and—*kept his vow*.

At length came Ienn's third and youngest brother. He did not fear King Shimba. For this youngest brother carried a powerful charm. He knew that Shimba would not eat him. With the youngest brother Shimba fought from morning until night. At sunset Shimba gave up the battle. He had never in his life been beaten before. He just put his head in his hands and sobbed.

"Boy," he said, "you may take your sister. I am beaten."

Then Ienn's youngest brother laughed. Shimba sprang up in a rage.

"But remember this," he said angrily: "if your sister ever marries again, she shall die."

Then Shimba cast himself into the river where the water was deep and still. There Shimba drowned, and that night the youngest brother carried the beautiful Ienn home.

Now after many days Ienn married the king of another village. There she went to live in a beautiful new hut which had been built for her.

But alas, only three days did Ienn live in the new home. Suddenly she fell ill. There was no help for her. The medicine man made the most hideous noises. He danced and jangled his bells. He called on the evil spirit which made Ienn ill. He begged it to go away. But that night Ienn died.

Then the brother remembered the last words of Shimba. The boy had loved his sister dearly. He sorrowed and sorrowed over her death.

One day the brother walked by the river-side. He looked down into the deep, quiet water where Shimba had died. Suddenly he started back in surprise. There at the bottom he could see Shimba sleeping

peacefully. By his side lay his wife, the beautiful Ienn.

In life Ienn had had beautiful shining nails. So brightly polished were they that they seemed to reflect the things about them like mirrors. It was for this very reason that she was called Ienn, or looking-glass.

Now in the water Ienn's nails shone clear and large. Looking down into the river, the brother could see the blue sky and the clouds and the trees reflected in the water. He could even see his own face there.

By and by the bodies of the sleeping king and his beautiful bride could no longer be seen. The river covered them gently. But still the brother could see his own face reflected in the waters below. In fact, ever since then people have been able to see the reflection of themselves, and of the sky and the clouds, and of all

things above, in the deep quiet of the waters.

Such is the story which the strange warriors tell when they see the reflections in the river.

AMONG THE CANNIBALS

IT was not many days after this that the foremost warriors stopped short in their march.

“What is it?” cried Nyam-Nyam, running forward.

But there was no need of an answer. There before them was a clearing. In the center of the clearing stood a fence made of long poles. This surrounded a village. Passing out through the gateway of this village were a number of hideous-looking warriors.

When the slaves, who had been so brave in the presence of the crocodiles and the elephants, saw these warriors, they quaked with fear. Their teeth chattered. They looked closer at the high fence of poles, and on the top of each pole they saw a

skull. Some of these were the skulls of animals. Some were the skulls of men.

“Have courage,” commanded Nyam-Nyam sternly. “Do not show your fear. We are too few in number to fight with these people. Let us, therefore, pretend we do not fear, but come as friends.”

By this time the hideous warriors were very near. The little party knew they were in great danger. But though Akimakoo knew he was at last in the presence of the cannibals, though he knew without joking that he might possibly serve as a cannibal breakfast, he did not show the least fear.

Nyam-Nyam stepped forward to greet the cannibal king. Akimakoo proudly stepped to the side of Nyam-Nyam. He placed his little black hand on Nyam-Nyam's arm and gazed at the strange warriors with bright, wide-open eyes.

They were immense fellows, over six feet high. They wore no clothing except strips of leopard's skin about the loins. Their entire bodies were tattooed fancifully with blue ink. Their teeth were filed to sharp points and stained black.

The cannibal king approached Nyam-Nyam. He was very hideous to see. He was in full war array. His body was painted bright red.

The cannibal king and his warriors wore their hair in two long braids down their backs. Their whiskers were braided in three or four stiff braids and stuck straight out from their faces. In every braid were strings of white beads. At the end of every braid hung a brass ring.

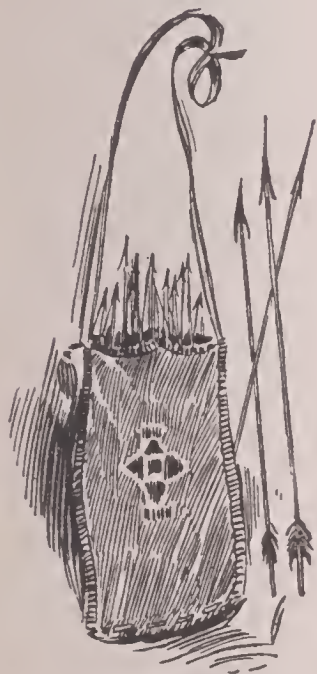
For a long time Nyam-Nyam and the cannibal king talked together. It chanced that the cannibals had just been at war with a neighboring tribe, and so had many

prisoners. They chose, therefore, to trade with Nyam-Nyam rather than take his little party captive.

Now the cannibals are great elephant hunters. They are almost as fond of elephant meat as they are of human flesh. The cannibal king had large quantities of ivory stored away in his chests. For this Nyam-Nyam wished to trade. The party entered the village, pretending that they had no fear, though the slaves were quaking, and even Nyam-Nyam the brave warrior felt anxious. Nyam-Nyam looked often at the cannibals' great shields of elephant's hide. He glanced, too, at the three ugly-looking spears which each warrior carried.

But that which Nyam-Nyam feared most was the little skin bag filled with arrows which was slung over each cannibal's shoulder. These arrows were very harmless-

looking indeed. They seemed only slender, hollow reeds. They were no more than a foot long. They were so light that a breeze would blow them away. But on the sharpened tip of each hollow, reed-like arrow was a little red stain. Nyam-Nyam knew this stain was the poison from which no man may recover.



POISONED ARROWS

The cannibals prepare this poison from the juices of a deadly plant which grows in the forest. They dip their arrows again and again into the sap of this plant and let the poison dry in. Then the cannibals carefully place the poisoned arrows in their skin bags.

They shoot these arrows from very strong bows. So rapidly do they fly through the air that one cannot see them

coming. So deadly is their poison that even the slightest scratch from one causes almost instant death.

Now Nyam-Nyam and his warriors carried poisoned arrows. They were prepared carefully. But only the cannibals know the secret of making these most deadly arrows, from whose poison no living creature has ever been known to recover.

It was no wonder, then, that Nyam-Nyam eyed those arrow bags with alarm, although all the time he pretended to be so brave.

As the party entered the village, the women and children came out. Their bodies were tattooed even more than those of the men. They wore brass anklets and iron earrings. Each of the queens wore a cap of white beads.

Nyam-Nyam's quick eyes soon noticed that though the beads were beautifully

strung, these cannibals had none but white beads. He knew how pleased they would be with the pink and the blue ones which he carried.

All that day and until noon the next day Nyam-Nyam and the cannibal chief talked and traded together. The cannibals were delighted with the pink and the blue beads. They begged Nyam-Nyam to come again with more. This Nyam-Nyam said he would do if the cannibals would promise to let no harm befall his men on this trip. The cannibals were glad to promise.

That night there was a grand dance in the cannibal village. There was music, too. Akimakoo was charmed with the music of the handja.

The handja was made of a set of hollow gourds securely fastened together and covered over with hard wood. The man who



THE DANCE IN THE CANNIBAL VILLAGE

made the handja music was a tall fellow with a necklace of carved elephants' teeth. He took the handja across his knees and beat it lightly with two sticks. At the same time another big fellow beat the drum. The drum was a hollow log with deer-skin stretched across the ends.

The musicians beat furiously, and the dancers danced until they were breathless. Everyone thought it a fine party.

The next morning our little company set out from the cannibal village. The slaves dragged great tusks of ivory. Indeed, they had all they could manage to carry.

"We may as well start for home," said Nyam-Nyam, when they were outside the village. "We have enough ivory to fill several chests, and we can carry no more. Come; our king will be pleased with us, and we shall be pleased to get home!"

The slaves gave one loud whoop of joy. Akimakoo felt a choking lump in his throat and a mist in his eyes when he thought of the home village, and of Kalulu his sister, and Yombée his mother.

“A-ha! A-ha! A-ha!” shouted the whole party in joy.



TRADING FOR IVORY

HOME AGAIN

FOR three days they journeyed on through the forest. At length they came to a great river.

“Look,” cried Nyam-Nyam. “This river is the same which flows near our village.”

The slaves who were bearing the heavy load of ivory gave a shout of joy.

“Now we shall no longer have to carry these heavy loads through the heat,” they cried. “We shall float, float, float, until we reach our home village.”

Nyam-Nyam laughed.

“You are lazy, I believe” he said, with a twinkle of fun in his eyes.

“Oh, no,” said the slaves. “We will prove to you that we are not lazy.”

They grasped their heavy knives, which

also served as axes, and ran to the nearest large tree. They chopped it down and began to hollow several canoes out of the great trunk.

When the canoes were finished the little party boarded them and set off down the river. Sometimes in the cool of the evening they paddled fast, but most of the time they just drifted lazily with the current of the river, which was very swift.

Once, in the cool of the morning, a log-like crocodile floated very near them.

"Let me!" whispered Akimakoo, grasping his knife closely.

"Go, boy; but be very careful," Nyam-Nyam whispered back. The boy's slim black body slid into the water so quietly that it scarce stirred a ripple. The wary crocodile did not see him.

Presently there was a great splashing in the water, and the ripples ran red with the blood of the crocodile. The huge tail

lashed the waters. The immense jaws opened and closed, opened and closed. The little party knew that the crocodile had received its death blow. But where was Akimakoo?

Nyam-Nyam felt his heart sink as the boy did not make his appearance. The three slaves that Akimakoo's father had given him sprang recklessly into the water to search for their little master. They thought that perhaps in diving he had become entangled in some of the vines or roots in the river bed.

The whole party forgot the crocodile in their anxiety for the boy. Swiftly the crocodile charged on the boat in which Nyam-Nyam sat.

"Hi-i! Hi-i!" cried a voice. "Look out for the great jaws!"

Nyam-Nyam nearly upset the canoe, so startled was he. For the voice was the

voice of Akimakoo. And there on a big black stump on the water's edge sat the little black boy, dripping with water, his smooth skin gleaming in the sunlight.

With a shout of joy the slaves once more turned their attention to the crocodile. But through loss of blood he was already weak. Before he reached the boat his great jaws suddenly closed for the last time. The crocodile rolled over in the water like a log. He was dead.

“Good for Akimakoo!” shouted the whole party.

Then the little shining black figure slipped off the stump and swam to the boat's side, where he was received with much shouting and laughter.

Akimakoo was the hero of the party for the entire day. At first he smiled proudly, but by and by Nyam-Nyam noticed that the boy sat quiet and thoughtful.

“Of what are you thinking?” Nyam-Nyam asked.

Akimakoo looked up quickly. His great soft black eyes were filled with tears.

“I was just thinking of home,” said Akimakoo softly, as though talking to himself. “I was thinking that in a day or two now we shall reach our own village. All the people will run down to the shore to welcome us. There will be shouting and laughing and feasting. And—I shall see my father, the king once more. I wonder—” the boy paused. He looked a little sad.

“Yes!” said Nyam-Nyam. “What do you wonder?”

“I wonder if my father will say that I have done well. I wonder if he will think I have proved myself worthy of him. In the whole journey I have killed no elephant, nor gorilla, nor lion.”

“But there was the crocodile.”

“Yes, I killed the crocodile this morning, and I did not fear. My arrows do not fail. Many a deer and wild boar have my arrows brought down. Many a bird on the wing have I shot. I am not a coward, but—” and the boy’s eyes looked wistfully into the water—“I wished to do something to prove myself a true man of the forest before I returned to my father, I should like to have my father, the king, praise me when I return. I should like to see Yombee, my mother, smiling with happiness because her son was brave. I should like to see tears of pride and happiness and love in Kalulu’s black eyes because I am her brother.”

The boy sighed discontentedly. Nyam-Nyam laid his big black hand on the boy’s woolly black head.

“Akimakoo,” he said gently, “you have

proved yourself brave and full of strength and courage and cheerfulness. Do not fear. I can tell your father that you are not a coward. And the greater things will come later; you are but a boy yet, and I am proud of you Akimakoo."

Words of praise from Nyam-Nyam sounded sweet to the boy's ears, and he fell asleep quite happily.

It was dusk the next evening when the canoes floated in sight of the home village. Akimakoo stood up in the boat and danced for glee.

"See the blue smoke arising from the fires," he cried. "I am sure my mother is roasting monkey meat over that biggest fire. I am sure that Kalulu is shelling squash seeds under that big tree! I am sure my father is smoking there in the twilight! Hurry! Hurry!" the boy shouted to the slaves. "Row faster!"

The slaves paddled more rapidly, and the boat fairly shot over the water. When they came nearer the whole party raised a loud shout.

It was answered by a shout from the shore, and a little band of people ran down to meet them.

Nyam-Nyam peered anxiously at the many fires gleaming in the dusk.

“See,” cried Akimakoo, “they have lighted many fires to welcome us!”

But Nyam-Nyam shook his head.

“Those fires were not lighted for us,” he said. “I fear there is trouble in our village. You may yet be able to prove your bravery, my boy!”

A moment later the canoes grated on the pebbles of the river bank. Akimakoo was the first to spring ashore.

There in the twilight he found Kalulu, grown taller and more beautiful. He

heard again too the gentle jangle of Yombee's bracelets and anklets. He felt her soft, warm arms about his neck. There he heard again his father's strong voice, and felt the warmth of his hearty greeting.

But through all the rejoicing of the home-coming ran a little thrill of uneasiness. No word was spoken as yet, but still the whole company felt it.

At last as Akimakoo hung around Kalulu's neck the string of shining beads made from the seeds of the gingerbread fruit, he asked her the cause of the many camp fires. Kalulu shivered and drew nearer to her brother before she answered.

"It is the leopard," she whispered. "He is growing more and more bold. We have set snares and traps, but we cannot catch him. First he helped himself to our fresh meat, which was hung outside

the huts. Then, last night,"—and Kalulu shivered again—"last night he sprang into the village. He seized a little black baby who was toddling before its mother, and was off in an instant. The poor mother has wailed and cried all day long. Nothing can comfort her.

"We have kindled these fires to frighten the horrible creature away. We do not know at what moment he may spring into camp and seize one of us."

When the hunters heard the story they grasped their hunting knives and their bags of poisoned arrows. The children huddled together. Mothers clasped their babies closer to them. All spoke in whispers. "Come," said Nyam-Nyam, "let us hide in safe places and watch for the leopard. This must be his last night."

The people of the village showed the hunters how the leopard always came

bounding from one particular thicket. Near this the hunters hid themselves and watched. For hours they lay hidden there, while the women and children huddled together in frightened silence in the center of the village.

At last Nyam-Nyam spoke to Akimakoo, who waited impatiently in the bushes beside him.

“Go and bring my other hunting knife. You will find it hanging on the wall of my hut,” he said.

Without a thought of fear Akimakoo ran to the hut. He found the big knife and started to return. He was following the narrow path which led to the center of the village. On either side grew grasses higher than the lad's head. He could hear the low tones of the women's voices, as they hushed the babies to sleep. He could see the gleam of their anklets in the bright moonlight.

Suddenly the moon slipped behind a cloud. At the same instant, in the tall grass before him Akimakoo saw *one eye* gleaming and glowing like a live ball of fire! The moon slipped out from behind the cloud. By its light Akimakoo could see the spotted sides of the leopard as it crept nearer. Then Akimakoo's legs shook with fear. He tried to cry for help. But his tongue seemed to cling to the roof of his mouth. He could make no sound. He could not move. After all, he was but a little boy. What could he do against this enormous, hungry beast?

At that moment he remembered the old elephant pit, of which he had spoken to Nyam-Nyam on the journey. He glanced about and saw that the pit was just on the *other side of the path*, opposite the leopard. He remembered how deep the pit was, and how sharp were the posts at the bottom.

The leopard had as yet made no sound. Akimakoo could see it crouching, ready to spring. Akimakoo's legs were trembling now so he could hardly stand. His heart was thumping so loudly that he could hear nothing else. But the brave boy took three steps nearer to the leopard. He now stood directly between the leopard and the pit. The white moonlight fell full upon him.

The next instant, with a low growl, the leopard was springing through the air, straight at Akimakoo. The boy, with a great effort, jumped aside. The leopard, with a snarl of rage, went crashing into the pit, and landed on the sharp points of the posts in the bottom.

At the sound of that growl the women and children screamed. The men rushed from their hiding-places. Yombee, forgetting everything but her boy, ran straight

to the spot, expecting to find Akimakoo dead.

“Oh, Akimakoo! My boy! My boy!” she cried as she ran.

Then there in the moonlight she saw him. He was bending his bow to receive one of the poisoned arrows. Akimakoo fixed the arrow carefully. Then he took aim. He watched for the angry gleam of the one eye in the pit. Then he fired, and his arrow flew true.

“The leopard is dead! The leopard is dead!” was the shout which was raised a moment later. Then they crowded around the boy and the leopard, which was now pulled out of the pit. “You are my brave son!” cried the king, proudly.

“You have proved yourself a true man of the forest,” said Nyam-Nyam, the mighty hunter.

APR 5 1924

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